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ELEGY.

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ELEGY

TO THE

MEMORY

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM MASON. R

I am Thos. G. G. G. M. A. J.

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MASON is dead!—From Afton's airy tow'r

The solemn warning vibrates down the vale:

Fame stood observant of his parting hour,

And all her hundred tongues proclaim the tale.

“Now haste,” she cries, “to yon funereal scene;

“Prepare, ye sons of Poesy! the verse;

“Round the dead Bard in crowded pomp convene,

“And hang with tributary praise the hearse.

“ Long did his name my labouring trumpet fill ;

“ O’er many a realm the pealing echoes roll’d :

“ And long and loud the blast that yet shall thrill,

“ Ere the full triumphs of his muse be told.

“ Ope then each fountain of poetic grief ;

“ Fulfil each rite by Time’s sure stamp approv’d :

“ Chide med’cine’s God, whose hand withheld relief ;

“ Chide the relentless Fates, by song unmov’d.

“ Breathe chilling blight on each Parnassian glade ;

“ Call from their withering bowers th’ Aonian quire ;

“ In fabler stole array the tragic maid ;

“ Let sad Thalia trail the inverted lyre.

“ Beckon the Dryad from each rifted oak ;

“ From mountain dells be Oreads heard to sigh ;

“ From lake and stream the Naiad train convoke ;

“ From coral groves let Nereid plaints reply. ”

“ O’er man and brute the cloud of woe extend ;

“ Let sympathizing gods for MASON grieve :

“ His lyre, a new-born star, in Heav’n suspend ;

“ Let meads of Asphodel his shade receive.”

Hence, Pagan dreams ! I mourn a Christian dead :

Avaunt ! his Christian friend a Christian weeps :

Hence, fabled gods, of doubt and folly bred !

Here (’twas his loftiest praise) a Christian sleeps.

Shall the pale meteor, whose illusive light

Through fogs and darkness gleam’d on Gentile eyes,

Survive the reign of antiquated night,

To claim the empire of meridian skies ?

Hence, Pagan dreams ! Too oft poetic youth

In Grecian robe hath stalk’d on British plains ;

With hackney’d fiction deck’d the song of truth,

And pranced with freedom’s air in classic chains.

O'er MASON's grave let nobler sorrows flow;
O'er MASON's grave let nobler themes ascend;
Themes, that nor shame the head that rests below,
Nor him who mourns, but mourns in Hope, the Friend.

Better, by Fancy if the robe be plann'd
That wraps the Poet in sepulchral state,
In British loom the purple woof expand,
With British hues the flowery verge dilate.

Yes, there are native flowers, to MASON dear,
By MASON nurs'd, that fairer tints might yield
Than those, the vaunted glory of the year,
Purloin'd from Latian or Achaian field.

Yes, with ideal honour's richest meed
The Bard, creative Fancy, would'ft thou grace,
Unfurl thy eagle wing, to MONA speed,
Her haunted rocks, her wizard caverns, trace.

Pierce the dread midnight of her holiest wood,
 The unhewn fane, the living* sphere obtest;
 Pause where of old the guileful Roman † stood,
 And guilt and horror smote his iron breast.

There, on that turf, to sacred grief consign'd,
 Beneath the central oak's mysterious shade,
 Where pale in death Arviragus reclin'd,
 Even on that turf be MASON's reliques laid.

Thither, from dens beneath, from cliffs above,
 Let Druids, Bards, a sorrowing throng, repair:
 There let each dark-rob'd Priestess of the grove
 Whirl the red torch, and shake her streaming hair.

* The rocking-stone.

† Aulus Didius.—See the first Scene of Caractacus.

Then let the frantic burst of woe rebound
In wildest symphony from every steep!
Then ring ye "notes that Mona's harps should sound,"
Then gush ye "tears that Mona's Bards should weep *!"

Or, Fancy, seek in Harewood's shade the dell,
Where Edgar's falchion pierc'd the rival youth;
Where votive spires the fond memorial tell
Of widow'd anguish and connubial truth †.

The cloister pass, the aisle's meridian gloom,
The hallow'd portals of the choir unclose,
Near God's high altar where, in marble tomb,
The bones of fainted Athelwold repose.

* See the Dirge sung over the dead body of Arviragus.—MASON'S Poems, vol. iii. p. 14.

† See the last Scene in Elfrida.

ELEGY.

II

Mark where aloft the pitying Angel weeps ;
Behold the speaking bust, the laurell'd urn :
Then, by the tomb where Harewood's Chieftain sleeps,
For Harewood's Bard a kindred tomb adorn.

There let the virgin train their sorrows blend ;
There, as for Athelwold, Elfrida sigh ;
And wrathful Orgar, as he mourn'd a friend,
Veil the red lustre of his tearful eye.

Yet why to scenes of imitative grief
Direct the wanderings of a troubled heart ?
In vain would genuine sorrow court relief
From gayest fictions of poetic art.

See Aston's fane her groaning valves expand,
In sable woe receive her Pastor dead ;
See round his bier, no mimic mourners, stand
The friends he cherish'd, and the flock he fed.

Mark from its height the solemn organ breathe ;

'Twas his own hand that plac'd the music there :

Lift to the infant choir that chaunts beneath ;

'Twas his own task their early song to rear.

Behold the white-rob'd Minister of Heav'n

(Such was He once !) the hallow'd rites begin ;

Tell of the grave subdued, a Saviour giv'n,

Life without end, and bliss unstain'd by sin.

Hark ! Heard ye not the grating cords withdrawn ?

Then fought Mortality her last abode ;

There waits the blush of that eternal dawn,

Which " bids the pure in heart behold their God."

Hark ! " Earth to earth—" The lifted spade behold !

With listening awe behold each face o'erspread !—

With sullen sound the emblematic mould

Drops on the hollow mansion of the dead !

“ Ashes to ashes”—Yet again the found !
Accordant groans from every breast reply.
“ Dust to—” In sobs the failing voice is drown’d :
The bursting sorrows stream from ev’ry eye.

Clos’d be the funeral scene ! On seraph wing
Let Hope the dead pursue to realms above ;
View him to meet his blest MARIA spring,
Nor fear the agonies of fever’d love.

For Hope was his, and Faith’s celestial ray :
Faith could the gloom of fever’d love assuage ;
Brighten’d in manhood’s golden prime the lay*,
And warm’d with holy flame the song of age †.

* See the Elegy on the Death of a Lady.

† See the Sonnets on the Anniversary of his Birth-Day 1795 and 1796.
A third, on the Anniversary in the present year, (Feb. 23,) was communicated by him to some of his friends. The Author was then seventy-two.

His breast, of lawless anarchy the foe,
For Britain swell'd with Freedom's patriot zeal*;
Nor thus confin'd, for every clime could glow,
And in a Slave's a Brother's wrongs could feel:

Could feel, o'er Afric's race when Avarice spread
Her bloody wing, and shook in scorn the chain;
While Justice, hand in hand by Mercy led,
To Christian senates cried, and cried in vain!

Now their new guest the sacred hosts include,
They who on earth with kindred lustre shone;
Whom love of God to love of Man subdu'd,
Nor Pride nor Avarice fear'd the heart to stone.

* See the Secular Ode on the Anniversary of the Revolution 1688.

There shall he join the Bards whose hallow'd aim
Sought from the dross of earth the soul to raise;
Disdain'd the meed of perishable fame,
And sunk the Poet's in the Christian's praise.

There 'mid empyreal light shall hail his GRAY;
There MILTON thron'd in peerless glory see;
The wreath that flames on THOMSON's brow survey;
The brighter crown that, COWPER, waits for thee.

THE END.

12
ELEGY.

There shall he join the Bards whose hollow'd aim
Sought from the dross of earth the soul to raise;
Disdain'd the need of perishable toys
And sunk the Poet's in the Christian's praise.

There mid empyreal light shall dwell his Gray;
There Milton shon'd a perfect glory see;
The wreath that shines on Johnson's brow survey;
The brighter crown that Newton waits for thee.

THE END.